

Property Writes



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“Think Snow”

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Utah State Tax Commission

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MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

– Denny Lytle

I think this time of year gives us a chance to look back at where we have been and carefully evaluate and review the services we provide to the public. I believe it is also an important time to look forward and plan for the future. This is a year where the legislature has spent significant time and energy on tax reform. The potential exists that this legislative session could bring some significant changes to the laws and programs we administer. We need to be prepared to effectively deal with any legislative changes that come out of this year's legislative session.

While the work we do can sometimes be very challenging, the people I know I can count on are the county officials. Every day I see professionalism and hard work exhibited by the people who serve the public at the local level.

At this season I would like to thank you and your staff for the opportunity we have had to work at your side this last year. I hope that we have been helpful and added to your success. We will continue to face the many challenges of administering tax laws, but I know that working together we can provide exceptional service to the people of Utah.

Sincere regards and best wishes for 2006

Centrally Assessed – Utilities

- Art Brownell

The Utility Section staff has nearly completed this season's work in auditing taxpayer's returns. To date, we have conducted audits on 12 companies. The staff also continues to work with taxpayers and counties to resolve outstanding appeals. A number of settlements have been reached and more continue to be under review and discussion. A few appeals have been scheduled for either informal or formal hearings.

Tax Rate Section

- LaMar Sayer

Well, 2005 is almost gone. Hard to believe but true non-the less. In reflection, it was probably one of the best tax rate years in my memory. We had very few problems, with the help of the county auditors, assessors and treasurers we were able to finish the certified tax rate process earlier than ever before.

We are now working with the assessors to refine the 233B process and will soon be involving the auditors and the treasurers. We feel that this project will provide better data and ensure that the assessing and collecting monies are equally distributed.

We are also beginning to work on a rewrite of the Property Tax Division's annual statistical report. We want to review all the data and make certain what we are reporting is correct and of value to its users. If you have any suggestions or questions please contact La Mar and let him know.

Finally, we want to thank you for all the help you provided to the tax rates section this year. You have not only made our jobs easier but have also made them much more enjoyable. Please have a wonderful, happy and safe holiday season.

Informing the Public Via the Local Media

- by Charlie Roberts, Public Info Officer
State Tax Commission

- #1 **Shoot Straight** – Be honest, especially when it hurts. Always preserve your integrity.
- #2 **Get On the Reporter’s Turf** – Understand the reporter’s perspective from a professional and personal point of view.
- #3 **When You Don’t Know, Say So** – Although you may not know the answer to all the questions, you may be able to point a reporter in the right direction.
- #4 **K.I.S.S. – Keep It Simple, Stupid** – Much of the technical information you deal with on an everyday basis is new information to most reporters. Simplify your message.
- #5 **Ain’t no such thing as “Off the Record.”** – Reporter’s tend to have short memories. It is common for reporters to find the same information somewhere else and have the trail lead to your doorstep.
- #6 **Go Ugly Early** – No one likes to deliver bad news. But if it is coming from your camp, it is best coming from you.
- #7 **Tell Your Story** – *or somebody else will.* You are the best source of information for your office.
- #8 **Ask Smart Questions** – Reporters aren’t shy, neither should you be. It’s always good to ask ‘What’s your deadline?’ ‘What’s the story about?’ ‘Who else have you interviewed?’ ‘What kind of information are you looking for?’ and other pertinent questions.
- #9 **Repeat, Repeat, Repeat, Repeat** – Make sure you drive your point home, several times if necessary.
- #10 **Stick to Your Message** – Journalists are trained to write clear, concise stories. It’s best to deliver your message in the same manner.

Web Site Review & Recommendations

-by Kerry Huntington
Utah Information Tech Services
(Presentation has been summarized)

Three classes of web sites:

- The Dreaded Brochure
- The Static Information site – no user interaction or services
- The Interactive Services & Data site

Top 10 “Good Deeds” in Web Design

1. Place your name and logo on every page and make the logo a link to the home page.
2. No “Brochureware” Provide a FEATURE SET that best benefits your users. You must pretend you are the user. Know “your place”. Know and adopt any “parent” design conventions.
3. Provide a SITE SEARCH if the site has more than 100 pages.
4. Write straightforward and simple. HEADLINES and PAGE TITLES that will make sense in a search engine results list.
5. Web Pages are scanned – not read. Structure pages to help the user ignore chunks of the page in a single glance.
6. Avoid long “infinite” or scrolling content pages. Use links and sub-headings to divide the content into a starting page with links to secondary pages.
7. IMAGES – Use tools to “zoom in” on most relevant detail of an image, then crop and resize to include the most value-detail in your images.
8. Use meaningful LINK Titles to give users a signal for where each link will take them, before they click on it.
9. Comply with accepted accessibility standards’ WC3. ADA etc. Know and cater to your audience.
10. Use “ego-less” web design. Anticipate users expectations. Users spend most of their time on other sites (Most are professionally developed and highly funded.)

Collaborate with your County! Leverage their resources and their design.

- If you are a principle in providing information, review the basic guidelines at sites like <http://webstyleguide.com>.
- Be Consistent
- Work with your office to set specific goals to move your services online.

In Other Words –

- Thanks RuthAnn Jefferies for this one

Can you figure out the real names of these Christmas songs? (Answers are at the end)

1. The apartment of two psychiatrists
2. Sir Lancelot has laryngitis
3. Give me dual incisors for this festive yuletide
4. The smog-less bewitching hour has arrived
5. Exuberation of this orb
6. 288 Yuletide hours
7. Do you perceive the same longitudinal pressure that stimulates my auditory sense organs?
8. Stepping on the pad cover
9. Leave and do an elevated broadcast
10. Hollow metallic vessels that vibrate and bring forth a ringing sound when struck
11. As the guardians of little wooly animals protected their charges in the shadows of the earth
12. Frozen precipitation commence
13. Oh, member of the round table with missing areas
14. We are Kong, Lear and Nat Cole
15. May the deity bestow and absence of fatigue to mild male humans
16. Have hitherward the entire assembly of those who are loyal in their beliefs
17. Obese personification fabricated of compressed mounds of minute crystals
18. Natal celebration devoid of color, rather albino, as a hallucinatory phenomenon for me
19. Jovial yuletide desired for the second person singular or plural by us
20. Boulder of the tinkling metal spheres

Changes in Property Tax:

Retiring –

Roger Ford – December 15, Natural Resources

New –

Wendy Du – County Rep IT

Melissa Fox – Personal Property Auditor

Kim Jones – County Rep

(Answers – In Other Words)

1. Nutcracker Suite
2. Silent Night
3. All I want for Christmas Is My Two Front Teeth
4. It Came Upon a Midnight Clear
5. Joy to the World
6. 12 Days of Christmas
7. Do You Hear What I Hear?
8. Up on the Housetop
9. Go Tell It on the Mountain
10. Jingle Bells
11. As Shepherds Watched Their Flocks by Night
12. Let It Snow
13. O Holy Night
14. We Three Kings
15. God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen
16. O Come All Ye Faithful
17. Frosty the Snowman
18. I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas
19. We Wish You a Merry Christmas
20. Jingle Bell Rock

Warmest thoughts and Best
Wishes for a wonderful Holiday
Season and a very Happy New
Year



From all of us at Property Tax